



Being Strategic about Strategies

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Objectives of Study

- ❖ To determine if there is a real difference in understanding between K-12 educators and teacher trainers when it comes to the concept of "strategies."
- ❖ To identify how K-12 educators and teacher trainers use it and define it.
- ❖ To clarify and bridge communication gaps by redefining terms or identifying more specific ones.

Research Questions

- ❖ What does the word "strategies" mean to K-12 educators and teacher trainers? How do they define it? Are there different kinds of strategies?
- ❖ What do K-12 educators and teacher trainers want from a strategy? What examples can they provide of a strategy?
- ❖ Are K-12 educators and teacher trainers in fact using the term differently?
- ❖ Is the term "strategies" becoming undervalued and overused? What is being overlooked when using a "generic" term like "strategies"?
- ❖ What terms can be used to clarify and bridge communication gaps between K-12 educators and teacher trainers?

Method

- ❖ Population—US-based K-12 educators and teacher educators in all fields of education (operational-purposeful sampling; self-selection)
- ❖ Survey Format—close-ended, Likert scaled questions and open-ended questions.
- ❖ Data Collection and Timeline
- ❖ Collection of data occurred during the Fall of 2011 for 10 weeks.
- ❖ Electronic survey using Qualtrics survey software.
- ❖ Sent survey to colleagues in k-16 public schools and asked colleagues to share with their networks; Shared the survey link on Facebook, on professional listservs and in professional newsletters.
- ❖ Data Sets: N= 144.
- ❖ K-12 educators= 86, 76% with 10+ years of experience, 39% teach grades 9-12; 24% teach grades 7-8; 30% teach grades 1-6, 48% ESL/ELL teachers, 9% Foreign Languages, 9% Elementary Ed, 9% Math, 9% English Language Arts.
- ❖ Teacher educators=58, 78% with 10+ years of experience, 63% university-level, 44% ESL/ELL teacher educators, 8% "Other fields" which was mostly literacy, 7% Foreign Languages, 7% English/Language Arts.
- ❖ Data Analysis
- ❖ Manner of coding—content analysis/open-coding of qualitative questions. Identification of over-arching patterns for each population.
- ❖ Code examples: linguistic mod. Technique. Method. Multivariate: including, etc.

Literature Review

- ❖ Diaz-Rico (2004) emphasizes the need to distinguish between terms like, strategies, megastategy, technique principle, practice, and method.
- ❖ Echevarria and Graves (2011), Diaz-Rico, L.T. (2004), and Ariza, E.N., Morales-Jones, C.A., Yahya, N., Zainuddin, H. (2002) discuss learning strategies as "a series of steps that can be repeated over and over and over to solve a problem or to complete a task."
- ❖ Ariza, E.N., Morales-Jones, C.A., Yahya, N., Zainuddin, H. (2002), give examples of strategies without explicit definitions, most of these sources were written by professors in the field of education and promote the idea that strategies are implemented in classrooms to make learners more independent.
- ❖ O'Malley M.J., Chamot, A.U. (1995) divide "strategies" into directly and indirectly related to learning. They also mention that techniques are different from strategies.
- ❖ Flood, J., Lapp, D., Wood, K.D., Taylor, C. (2008) introduce "strategy guides" for learners and mention their idea is derived from the idea that "the end goal of effective instruction is the creation of independent, strategic learners."
- ❖ Reis, J. (2008), defines strategies as "techniques that facilitate learning" whereas O'Malley M.J., Chamot, A.U. (1995), identify strategies as being different from techniques in that "techniques differed from strategies in their scheme by being focused on specific aspects of language learning." Rubin, J., Wenden, A. (1987) note that strategies have been used as synonyms for terms such as "techniques."

Data Set 1: "When you employ the term "strategies," what does it mean to you?"

Number		% of K-12 Teachers	% of Teacher Educators
1	Instructional strategies, such as lesson planning and sequencing.	74%	80%
2	Instructional delivery, such as ways of presenting new materials, demonstrations, grouping arrangements, classroom management.	95%	97%
3	Instructional tools, such as graphic organizers or manipulatives.	87%	73%
4	Communication strategies, such as asking comprehension check questions, repeating information/questions, using circumlocution, making clarification requests, or employing Instructional Conversation.	85%	87%
5	Learning strategies, such as teaching note-taking or mapping skills.	97%	87%
6	Reading strategies, such as predicting, previewing, questioning the text/author, visualizing, or summarizing.	95%	90%
7	Linguistic modifications, such as altering your speaking rate, enunciating clearly, repeating key words/phrases, scaffolding questions, or paraphrasing/recasting.	92%	90%
8	Other? Please explain what that is to you in the space provided below.	18% "specific examples	0

Data Set 2: "In your opinion, which of the following items would you NEVER CONSIDER a strategy?"

Instructional strategies, such as lesson planning and sequencing.	78%	50%
Instructional delivery, such as ways of presenting new materials, demonstrations, grouping arrangements, classroom management.	22%	0
Instructional tools, such as graphic organizers or manipulatives.	56%	40%
Communication strategies, such as asking comprehension check questions, repeating information/questions, using circumlocution, making clarification requests, or employing Instructional Conversation.	22%	20%
Learning strategies, such as teaching note-taking or mapping skills.	22%	30%
Reading strategies, such as predicting, previewing, questioning the text/author, visualizing, or summarizing.	22%	0
Linguistic modifications, such as altering your speaking rate, enunciating clearly, repeating key words/phrases, scaffolding questions, or paraphrasing/recasting.	33%	20%
Other? Please explain what that is to you in the space provided below.	0	0

Results of Study

- ❖ **All K-12 teachers viewed a difference in the concept of strategies whereas 97% of teacher educators did. 47% of K-12 Teachers and 59% of Teacher Educators thought the populations employed the term differently.**
- ❖ **The greatest areas of difference in terms of what the populations would include in the definition of strategies were:**
 - K-12 Teachers viewed strategies as inclusive of instructional tools (14% more than T.Ed.) such as manipulatives and graphic organizers and learning strategies they teach their K-12 students (10% more than T.Ed.).
 - Whereas 6% more Teacher Educators than K-12 Teachers viewed strategies as inclusive of instructional/lesson planning and sequencing.
- ❖ **Both populations had very low numbers of strategies they would exclude:**
 - 28% difference (78% K-12 Teachers/50% of T.Eds). A high % of K-12 Teachers would exclude instructional/lesson planning and sequencing as a strategy.
 - 22% difference (22% of K-12 Teachers/ 0 of T.Eds) would exclude both categories of Instructional Delivery and Reading Strategies.
- ❖ **In differentiating Instructional Strategies from Instructional Tools:**
 - Categories they Viewed Similarly:
 - K-12 Teacher and Teacher Educators viewed methods (within .05), demonstrations (within .18) and writing journals or essays (within .03) similarly as Instructional Strategies.
 - They also agreed very closely (within .10) that graphic organizers were Instructional Tools.
 - Categories they Viewed Differently:
 - Handouts—a difference of 10.67%. K-12 Teachers more including them while zero Teacher Educators (T.Eds) did.
 - Worksheets—a difference of 4.67%. More K-12 Teachers including them than T.Eds.
 - The largest differences in Instructional Tools were:
 - Discussions—a difference of 9.25. K-12 Teachers included them whereas zero T.Eds did.
 - Note-Taking—a difference of 2.55. More K-12 Teachers included them than T.Eds.
- ❖ **K-12 Teachers** tended to view strategies as dealing less with group work and cooperative learning. The top five categories for strategies that were employed by teachers were: learning strategies, tools, instructional strategies, cooperative work, and activity and techniques. (the latter two were tied.)
 - 50% teachers mentioned in our survey that the term "strategies" is overused, 47% mentioned it is ambiguous, and 42% said it was meaningful.
- ❖ **Teacher Educators** tended to view strategies as dealing more so with cooperative and group learning. The top five categories for strategies that were employed were: 1. Instructional Strategies, 2. Grouping, 3. Activities, 4. Learning Strategies, 5. Tools.
 - 59% of teacher educators said the term "strategies" is overused, 48% said it was meaningful, and 45% said it was ambiguous.
- ❖ A majority of K-12 teachers see a problem with using a catch-all term like "strategies." They state: "You cannot effectively collaborate when you do not have a common meaning for basic terms," and "If you want people to use strategies then it needs to be clarified and defined so that your expectations may be met." Those who said there weren't any problems explained, "It can be, but any confusion is quickly cleared by the context of the discussion."
- ❖ A majority of teacher educators said there was a problem with using a catch-all term like "strategies." An example of a "yes" response was, "Yes, because not everyone understands the term." Those who said no, mentioned how the content is more important than the "term" and as educators, we should all be familiar with the term.
- ❖ 78% of K-12 teachers would never consider instructional strategies such as lesson planning and sequencing as a strategy.
- ❖ 50 % of teacher educators also said they would never consider instructional strategies such as lesson planning and sequencing as a strategy.

Discussion

- ❖ When asked, "Do you think a catch-all term like strategies causes a miscommunication between k-12 teachers and teacher educators," 62% of individuals responded yes, and 28% of individuals responded no.
 - Example of a "yes" response: "We need to be very clear, specific, align to standards and objectives. Show teachers what we mean, and allow their voices in what they mean."
 - Example of a "no" response: "So long as the term is understood in all its complexity, then miscommunication can be minimized."
- ❖ In professional development scenarios, a majority of individuals feel there is a disconnect between K-12 teachers and teacher educators in terms of expectations for professional development sessions.
 - K-12 teachers think teacher educators are "out of touch" for example, "Teacher educators have no had extensive classroom experience, and lack credibility with K-12 classroom teachers."
 - Also, "Sometimes what is taught is dictated by "higher-ups" who are often rather removed from the classroom."
- ❖ The theme of methodology being strongly linked to the concept of teaching and learning strategies in education comes up for both teachers and teacher educators. Distinguishing between teaching and learning strategies is accomplished, but what exactly they entail compared to methods, techniques, tools, etc., is rather vague (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).
- ❖ K-12 teachers saw themselves more so as users of strategies, whereas teacher educators see themselves as creators of strategies.
- ❖ Teacher educators saw strategies as multivariate and broke down strategies into multiple categories that weren't present amongst K-12 teachers such as: instructional strategies, techniques, procedures, learning strategies, methods, approaches, manipulatives/tools, and activities.



Implications

- ❖ The findings imply that each of the models are fundamentally flawed and perhaps a model that blends the two would solve the inherent problems in each.
- ❖ The other possible implication is that co-teaching, which can be a variant of the push-in model, but is not always the case, should have teachers trained in collaborative instruction. Or all general education teachers could be dually prepared to teach English language learners.

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